



NOAA Teacher at Sea
James Miller
Onboard NOAA Ship RAINIER
August 13 - 27, 2005

Log 6

Day 8: Saturday, August 20, 2005

Location: Anchored in Cushing Bay northwest side of Mitrofinia Island

Weather: Sunny, low 60's

Wind: 10-15kts

Seas: Calm in bay; 3-5 foot chop in open ocean

Itinerary: Working around Mitrofinia Island

Science and Technology Log

I was assigned to RA-3 today to do some deep-water surveys northeast of the Island. Had a big breakfast of waffles and eggs because I figured with the rough seas I wouldn't be interested in eating much for lunch. I was one of three assigned to the launch. In addition to myself, there was an officer and coxswain. The past couple days I was the fourth, so I felt good that they trusted me enough working with the boat and equipment that I made up the third spot.

We were delayed about an hour because they couldn't lower our launch into the water. One of the tracks on the boom that lowers the launch bent the day before so the wheels couldn't pass through. They had to pull out torches and all sorts of equipment to repair it. Within an hour they were able to temporarily fix it to get the launch in the water but it took the rest of the day to finish the job. The crew is incredibly skilled and ready to fix anything that breaks onboard.

The survey lines we had today were about 8 miles long. Considering we can only cruise at about 7 knots when surveying, it took about an hour to complete one line. The weather wasn't too bad until we got out into the open ocean. It was just sloppy. A three to five foot chop tossed us around. In addition, what made it worse was that the survey lines ran parallel to the seas; we were getting tossed from side to side for hours on end. I was amazed that the sonar signal could accurately collect the bottom data in such rough seas. Apparently the POS System that senses and records all the movement of the boat using an accelerometer is designed to compensate for these situations.

Again, the first thing we had to do was send down the cast. The cast is the device that collects water temperature, salinity, and density at varying depths, which is then used to calibrate the sonar. We were in 300 feet when we sent it down and it took forever for it to hit bottom and bring it back up. The pitching boat made it all the more challenging.

We had a very knowledgeable and seasoned coxswain onboard. He is a big burly guy with a white beard like Santa Claus, and he's the type that can drink cold black

coffee and lukewarm clam chowder in 5 foot seas. He also made us do two man-over-board drills. When we weren't paying attention, he would throw a fender overboard and yell out man-over-board. I learned quickly that they take these drills very seriously. During the first one, the officer was at the helm, and I had to pull in the fender (person). During the second one, I was at the helm, and had to turn the boat around and approach without running it over. It definitely broke up the day.

Personal Log

I have to say I was glad when the day was over. When I got back onto the ship my head was spinning. Luckily I had no problem with seasickness though and was able to perform my job on the launch. Had a big dinner of ziti and chicken and then went back to the fantail to try my luck at halibut fishing. After about an hour, I called it quits. No luck today. At 7:00 a skiff was running people to the beach for a beach party. It was a good time, but as the sun started setting the bugs started biting.

I'm barely finding time to work on my logs. Although tomorrow I'm not scheduled to be on a launch and I might be able get caught up. I'd also like to get up to the plot room where they begin processing the data.

The ship will be getting underway tomorrow to do some deep-water surveying itself. I think we'll be anchoring on the northeast side of the Island to get out of the bad weather that's heading our way. Unfortunately the weather will be with us until we get back to Seward. We will be making a stop off at Kodiak Island for refueling which will be cool. Officer Evans said I might be able to check out the sights for a couple of hours.